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Special Analysis

SOUTH KOREA: **Jitters in Ruling Party**

With less than a month to go before South Koreans elect a new president, the opposition is focusing on ruling-party candidate Roh Tae Woo's ties to Chun and the coup that began the President's rise to power. Roh has made little headway in his efforts to deflect attention from his identification with the military-dominated government. While no decisive trend in voter opinion has yet emerged, reporting from a variety of sources suggests the ruling camp is exploring ways to preempt an opposition victory. (b)(3)

Leading opposition candidates Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung have increased attacks against Roh for his role in Chun's takeover, particularly his decision to withdraw troops from forward areas to support Chun's move against Army headquarters in December 1979. Both Kims have recruited former military officers to speak out against the Army's role in politics. The success of Kim Young Sam in persuading former General Chung Sung Hwa to join his camp has been especially damaging to Roh. Chung, the Army Chief of Staff overthrown by Chun, has publicly challenged the ruling camp's justification for removing him. (b)(3)

Chung and other purged officers no doubt are lining up with the Kims partly in hopes of revenge and restitution, but their move also may ease concerns among politically moderate voters about the Kims' ability to reach rapprochement with the military. (b)(3)

Roh Tries To Look Ahead

The ruling camp—knocked off balance by the Kim Young Sam–Chung Sung Hwa alliance—has had to defend the 1979 takeover. Roh's efforts to explain his actions have been only partly successful. The US Embassy says some of Roh's advisers are urging him to put even more distance between himself and Chun, perhaps with a grand reform gesture close to election day. Roh's personal ties to Chun—who reportedly still controls the party's purse strings—and pressure from hardline Chun loyalists have kept Roh from going very far. Instead, he has tried to direct the public's attention to the future, publicly committing himself to an agenda of political and social welfare reforms that match or outstrip those of the opposition. (b)(3)

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The approach has not yet paid off. The ruling party's costly political rallies have been marred by protests and low turnouts. Ruling-camp strategists are reportedly worried about the rising popularity of Kim Young Sam among white-collar workers and the inroads made by fourth-place candidate Kim Jong Pil among conservative voters. Feedback from local party organizations, the police, and rank-and-file bureaucrats also suggests little grassroots enthusiasm for pushing Roh's campaign. Indeed, in an effort to motivate his subordinates to do more, Chun's security chief reportedly has told them that they might as well "throw themselves in front of a truck" if the opposition wins. [redacted] (b)(3)

Preparing for the Worst

Planners in the ruling camp are becoming increasingly nervous about Roh's chances in a noncontrolled election, according to a variety of sources. As a result, they are considering black propaganda and dirty tricks, reportedly to include ballot tampering; some officials now appear prepared to go even further. [redacted] (b)(1) (b)(3) claims ruling-camp planners have thought about fabricating evidence of ruling-party fraud to give Chun an opportunity to declare the election null and void if government projections from early returns indicate Roh is losing. [redacted] (b)(3)

Recent polls, while of questionable accuracy, suggest the race is far from over. But signs the ruling camp is unwilling to accept defeat raise concern about the prospect for prudent calculation in the homestretch if the tide appears to be moving strongly against Roh. [redacted] (b)(3)

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